

10/26/05

Commissioner Robert E. Nicolay
Chairman, Certificate of Need Task Force
Maryland Health Care Commission
4160 Patterson Avenue
Baltimore MD 21215

Dear Commissioner:

I first wrote to this task force back in May. Through MNCHA, I have been able to follow the process and read the minutes. Before the final vote is taken, I felt compelled to attempt to give voice to those who will be most effected by the changes to this system; the poor and elderly. For the record, we are a for profit agency that for twenty five years has provided services to Medicare, Medicaid and privately insured patients; so we are not trying to keep just the higher reimbursements for ourselves. There are two critical points I would like to make.

Pam Barclay spoke to MNCHA in September. Ms Barclay stated that she anticipated a beneficial impact on both quality and cost of home health care.

No one on this task force seems to be aware that there is still a shortage of home health nurses, and more urgently, there is a critical shortage of physical therapists as we lose more and more of them to the facilities and clinics that don't burden them with the paperwork involved in home health. The providers are the driving factors. If you have more people trying to employ a finite number of providers, you don't have to be an economist to see that costs will increase and quality will have to decrease

as a function of making up the additional monies being spent on salaries.

My understanding is that no one that represents the OHQ is on the task force. Wendy Kronmiller also addressed MNCHA in September. I asked her if anyone had an idea of how the elimination of the CON would impact her department. She said that there had been no feasibility study. At the very least, to recommend elimination of the CON for home health care before there was funding and manpower in place to provide licensure and oversight would be grossly negligent on the part of this task force. OHQ is already going to be overburdened by the changes to the RSA's and proposed changes to the scope of services which can be provided by non skilled workers. Someone needs to be looking at the big picture and not just the individual components.

I know that you need to look at the numbers but in home care, particularly with a small agency such as ours, we have to look right into the faces of the people who are most vulnerable and dependent upon the quality and integrity of their caregivers. Please insure that we can keep the care in home health care.

Sincerely,

Patti Maguire
Branch Administrator
Personal Touch Homecare